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September 27, 2012

The Honorable Representative Paul E. Opsommer, Chair, and
Honorable Members of the House Transportation Committee
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing MI 48909

**Re: AARP Support for Southeast Michigan Regional Transit Authority legislation:
House Bill 5309 (Rep. Jim Townsend)
House Bill 5314 (Rep. Rudy Hobbs)**

Dear Chairman Opsommer and Committee Members,

We are writing on behalf of AARP Michigan to offer our support for House Bills 5309 and 5314 as part of the package of legislation currently before the Legislature to establish the Southeast Michigan Regional Transit Authority for the coordination of public transit within the region consisting of Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties.

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan 501c4 social welfare organization with a membership that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. More than 1.4 million Michigan citizens are AARP members.

AARP members and the 50+ population in Southeast Michigan both want, and need, access to a public transit system that connects their communities. Public transportation is an important resource for older people in particular. Nationally, more than 20 percent of people age 50 and older report using public transportation at least once a month, and the availability of safe, affordable public transportation is one of the essential pillars of an "Age Friendly" community as identified by the World Health Organization.

The need for this legislation was identified this spring at a roundtable event hosted by AARP and Governing Magazine in East Lansing entitled "Creating Communities for All Ages," at which state and local leaders from across the state gathered to discuss what we need to do to make Michigan a more Age Friendly state. An "age-friendly" community is friendly for all ages rather than just "elder-friendly," and the availability of public transit in particular is important to seniors and Millennials alike. AARP is excited about Michigan becoming a more Age Friendly state because we believe this has great potential for creating positive momentum and positive economic development opportunities for the state. By becoming more Age Friendly, we will create an improved quality of life, and quality of place, that successfully anticipates our state's demographic development.

We urge the House to pass these bills as soon as possible as an important step toward creating a more Age Friendly Michigan. Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Morrison
State Director

Robert Kolt
State President